

The importance of water to Maori

Learning outcomes

- Students will be able to explain why water is important to Maori.
- Students can investigate the physical and spiritual relationship of water to Maori.

Method

1. The students read the story “The sustainable use of water by Maori” (**BLM 6**). They then place the Maori words into the correct place in the story. The words should be placed in the story in the following order: Papatuanuku, treasures, kaitiakitanga, food, spiritual, rahui, sacred, kaitiaki.
2. As a class, answer the following questions:
 - Why is water important to Maori? Give at least 2 reasons.
 - Why did Maori protect streams from pollutants?
 - Explain what is meant by the term ‘a conservation ethic’. Explain how Maori do this.
3. Read the following paragraph to the students. There are some suggested activities below.

Awa – the river

Maori view rivers as the blood of Papatuanuku (the earth mother). Just as our own blood carries food around the body, so does a river carry kai (food and sustenance) around the land. In our bodies, blood carries away impurities. On the land, a river carries away impurities and keeps the land healthy. But if we eat too much junk food our blood can become sick. Likewise, if there are too many pollutants in a river it too will become sick. If our blood or our rivers are sick, then so are our bodies and our land.

1. Draw a picture, create a poem or make a sculpture to represent this analogy of rivers and blood.
2. Create your own analogy for rivers and how they affect the land around them.
3. Investigate the history of the inter-relationship of Maori and fresh water.
4. Talk to tangata whenua about a local awa (river), how it was once used and is used today.

Teachers’ notes

These suggested activities are just the tip of the iceberg. There is a wealth of knowledge and experience for students to discover about the relationship between Maori and the environment. The best way to find out more is to contact your local iwi. The Action Crew can provide contact details.